

6/15/78 Argentina R  
June 15, 1978

MEMO TO MLS  
FROM RC

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ARGENTINA: CONTINUING VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE  
THE NEWSOM VISIT

Most of this information is based on our cable traffic, in particular a round-up report of the Embassy of June 9 covering the period until May 31 and cables thereafter.

1. Torture and other Police and Military Abuse

In May, our Embassy reported that "physical torture continues to be used regularly during the interrogation of suspected terrorists and so-called 'criminal subversives' who do not fully cooperate."

On June 9, the Embassy reported that "the Red Cross' major concerns at present are the physical abuses directed against political prisoners in La Plata Prison, the disappearance of the prisoners at the time of their release and guard brutality during inter-prison transfers." The Embassy also reported that a Time correspondent informed them that persons apprehended in connection with having placed a bomb in the San Martin Cultural Center parking basement "died under interrogation soon after their arrest."

With respect to Hargindeguy's May 3 speech about bringing the police (and military) under control, the Director of Internal Security in the Ministry of Interior, Col. (Ret.) San Roman told the Embassy that Government efforts in this respect would take "a long year." (Police and military are being detained and investigated for abuse of authority, in particular kidnapping, bribery, robbing and stealing; no mention of homicide is made.) Torture continues

2. Disappearances

77 disappearances have been reported to the Embassy since the beginning of 1978. It reported a rise in April and May (10 in April and 18 in May).

Newsom in a report to Congress on June 7 on the question of accounting for the disappeared, stated that "a satisfactory mechanism to deal with this question has not been established yet," although the Minister of Interior declared that such an effort would be made.

According to the June 9 cable, the human rights organizations who placed the list of 2,592 disappeared in La Prensa May 7, report a "large influx of new disappearance reports." They plan to publish a follow-up

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2

list after the World Cup ends.

There have also been reports that mothers of the Plaza staging marches in June on behalf of their disappeared relatives were broken up by the police and several detained.

### 3. New Arrests & Current Prisoners

The Embassy reported that from January-May 1978, 297 were added to PEN:

With regard to the 3,300 acknowledged PEN detainees, Newsom reported to Congress that while the Minister of Interior said steps would be taken to release or charge these prisoners, "neither President Videla nor the Minister of the Interior were willing to provide timetables or indicate when such releases actually might take place."

With regard to disappearances of released prisoners, the Embassy reported that the Minister of Interior instructed all penal facilities in early May not to release prisoners after 1800 hours and to notify families of releases and encourage them to meet the prisoners. However, the Embassy received a report from a human rights organization member in June that "a PEN prisoner refused to leave La Plata prison late at night in early May. Prison officials...responded that his refusal would be taken out on the prisoner's wife, who has been missing for a number of months."

### 4. Right of Option

From January to May, 27 were allowed to leave under the right of option. The total for May was 2. The Embassy reported that the Presidential Right of Option Advisory Council is reportedly to speed this up; by mid-May over 300 petitions had been received.

The GOA has rejected ICEM participation in the right of option program, to be challenged by our and other Governments in Europe.

### 5. Special Interest Cases

a) Timerman, under house arrest, is undergoing "a long drawn out investigation" of his capital assets. (According to Tex, everyone knows that Timerman is clear financially.) There is increased concern regarding his safety. Over 50 policemen are guarding him. The Ministry of Interior has permitted only his immediate family, rabbi and the Israel Ambassador visitation rights; his lawyer has not been allowed to see him nor any doctor.

3

b) Liliana Deutsch remains detained and was transferred from Cordoba penitentiary to a nearby military camp to prevent her being interviewed by the ICRC.

*released 6/16*

c) Alfredo Bravo, leader of the Argentine Teacher's Union and Co-President of the Permanent Association for Human Rights remains detained (now 9 months).

d) Adolfo Perez Esquivel, recently nominated for the Nobel Prize, remains detained, reportedly without charge.

#### Persecution of Lawyers

The Embassy reported in June that on April 15, the Buenos Aires Bar Association issued a statement deploring the recent assassinations of 2 lawyers, one a prominent labor lawyer Juan Carlos Deghi.

#### Religious Freedom

To date, none of the following religious sects have been granted official registration as required under Decree Law 21475: the Jehovah's Witnesses, Krishna Consciousness Movement, Divine Light Mission, Center of Inner Religion.

Five members of the American Knights of Fire (CAHF) are detained for alleged dissemination of "disassociative ideas." Some members of the Center of Inner Religion may still be in detention. Jehovah's Witnesses are forbidden from holding public meetings, publishing materials or conducting house to house preaching. They and the other sects have been harassed and arrested; all the Witnesses to date are released from prison.

Unconfirmed reports from Israel were presented to our Embassy about anti-semitic acts, in particular special mistreatment of Jewish political prisoners and anti-Jewish slogans on Jewish stores.

#### Press Freedom

The Argentine Press Association on April 1 protested the continued detention of 14 journalists without charge; the intervention by military authorities against 3 Argentine newspapers, including La Opinion; the disappearances of 8 journalists; the suspension of the Buenos Aires evening paper La Razon. On April 25, the Association protested the 3-day shut down of La Opinion and Cronica. A June 13 Embassy cable reported the disappearance of editor Julian Jose Delgado (El Cronista Comercial and Mercado) although it is unclear

to the Embassy whether the disappearance was due to illness and nervous breakdown.

The GOA has repealed two Peronist decrees that had hampered the operation of foreign news agencies in Argentina (by barring the publication or broadcast in Argentina of stories about Argentina written by foreign news agencies.)

#### Trade Union Rights

In addition to trade union disappeared and detained, and prohibitions on trade union activities, The GOA in reply to the ILO, provided "no information concerning those individuals asked about for whom 'there exists no arrest order nor are (officially) detained.'" This was reported by our Embassy June 14.

This year, unlike last, the Argentine labor movement will be represented at the annual meeting of the ILO. However, according to the Latin America Political Report, this occurred after the GOA threatened to send a delegation from groups faithful to it. It represents no improvement in labor union rights.